



**BRIAN E. FROSH, MARYLAND ATTORNEY GENERAL**

# **PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Media Contacts:**  
[press@oag.state.md.us](mailto:press@oag.state.md.us)  
410-576-7009

## **Attorney General Frosh Applauds Passage of Legislative Priorities**

**BALTIMORE, MD (April 12, 2022)** – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh today applauded General Assembly passage of legislation that bans ghost guns in Maryland, implements recommendations of the Attorney General’s COVID-19 Access to Justice Task Force, and provides additional tools to the Independent Investigations Division.

“Our priority legislation promotes public safety, provides additional protections for vulnerable Marylanders, provides millions of dollars for lifesaving opioid treatment, and enhances our ability to provide thorough transparent investigations,” said Attorney General Frosh. “I appreciate the members of the Maryland General Assembly for their hard work and commitment to progress on behalf of all Marylanders.”

In recent years, ghost guns have become a rapidly growing threat to public safety. The General Assembly passed a bill (SB387/HB425), prohibiting the sale, purchase and transfer of ghost guns. The bill also prohibits the possession of ghost guns after March 1, 2023.

The General Assembly also passed bills ([HB 1086/SB 419](#)) amending Maryland law to implement the Attorney General’s opioids settlement with the nation’s three major pharmaceutical distributors – Cardinal, McKesson, and AmerisourceBergen – and the opioids manufacturer Johnson & Johnson. Under the \$26 billion national settlement agreement, the State and its subdivisions will receive approximately \$395 million over 18 years. The bills direct these funds to be distributed in accordance with the allocation formula agreed upon by the State and its subdivisions earlier this year.

The General Assembly took important steps toward implementing recommendations made by the Attorney General’s COVID-19 Access to Justice Task Force, especially ensuring that Marylanders are housed by reducing the number of evictions.

- **Funding the Access to Counsel in Evictions Program:** Specifically, the General Assembly appropriated \$12 million for FY23 – the amount that the Access to Counsel in Evictions Task Force concluded would be needed for the first year of program implementation. The General Assembly also took steps to secure \$14 million in funding for FY24 through the abandoned property fund (SB 662) and to direct additional funds to the Program from state recoveries in certain actions brought by the Consumer Protection

Division (SB279/HB571). Together, this funding will allow Maryland Legal Services Corporation to begin the important work of implementing the Program.

- Permitting tenants to petition courts to shield from public access failure-to-pay-rent actions brought against them during the COVID-19 pandemic (HB 521). The legislation applies only to actions filed on or after March 5, 2020 (the date Governor Hogan declared the COVID-19 state of emergency) and before January 1, 2022.
- Requiring courts to pause eviction proceedings where a tenant has a pending application for rental assistance. (SB 384)
- Increasing the amount and type of data that is collected and reported about evictions, which is essential to targeting resources and education about eviction prevention services to vulnerable tenants and communities. (HB 824)

Additional Legislation supported by the Office of Attorney General:

- Independent Investigations Division: [SB 763](#): Provides a clearer definition of “alleged or potential police-involved death of a civilian,” provides injunctive relief if a hostile jurisdiction tries to obstruct an investigation, and fixes a technical flaw in the Office of Attorney General’s subpoena power.
- HB349/SB452 - For too long, debtors in small claims actions (under \$5,000) ended up in jail for failing to respond to discovery seeking information about their income and assets, which mostly impacted the State’s minority communities. Most creditors now use services on the web to obtain information about a debtors’ income and assets. Another recommendation of the Attorney General’s COVID-19 Task Force, the bill provides that a Court can no longer order a debtor in a Small Claims action to answer interrogatories or appear for a deposition about their income and assets, which will help prevent the debtors from ending up in jail in connection with a small debt.
- HB391/SB114 – Monies recovered by State agencies from False Claims actions are currently deposited to the State General Fund. The bill provides that recoveries for specially or locally funded agencies will be returned to those agencies instead of the General Fund. The bill also allows the Office of Attorney General to use costs and attorneys’ fees recovered in a False Claims action to be used for enforcement of the False Claims Act.
- HB962/SB643: Maryland Personal Information Protection Act - In light of a substantial increase in the number of data breaches, the bill updates Maryland’s data breach law to increase the types of personal information that businesses must protect. The bill also shortens the time frames for businesses that experience a data breach to notify affected consumers and requires additional information about the breach to be provided to the Consumer Protection Division.
- HB245 – Supported by the Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Policy and Funding Committee (SAEK), the bill removes the sunset on the Pilot Program for Preventing Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Infection for Rape Victims. The legislation also removes the limits placed on the total amount that physicians, qualified health care providers, and hospitals may be paid for providing certain treatment and follow-up care in relation to HIV non-occupational post-exposure prophylaxis (nPEP) treatment.

<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2022/041222.pdf>